LPTs/VLPTs in Kerala

646. SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether Low Power Transmitter was sanctioned at Pala and Very Low Power Transmitter (VLPT) were sanctioned in Erattupeta and Mundakkayam in Kottayam District of Kerala; and

(b) if so, the present stage of the Projects and steps taken to implement these projects?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRIMATI. SUSHMA SWARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The sites for setting up of Low Power TV Transmitter (LPT) at Pala and the Very Low Power TV Transmitter (VLPT) at Erattupeta are being identified and completion of these LPT/VLPT project will take about one to two years time subject to availability of resources, and other infrastructural facilities.

Development of Ports

647 SHRI T. GOVINDAN : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the proposal of the Kerala Government regarding the development of Azhikkal/Beypore/ Vizhinham ports is pending with the Union Government for the Central assistance on the recommendation of the working group constituted by the Ministry in 1992; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN) : (a) and (b) The proposal received from Kerala Government was incomplete and therefore could not be considered for Central assistance.

Licence Fees for Basic and Cellular Services

648. SHRI K.P. NAIDU : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the licence fee quoted for basic and Cellular services are unrealistic and higher; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to reduce it to allow the projects to take off?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA) : (a) The bidders for both Basic and Cellular services themselves quoted the licence fee for various Telecom Circles in a competitive bidding process, after assessing the demand for these services.

(b) The operator's Associations have represented about the poor health of both Cellular and Basic service industry and have requested for certain financial reliefs. Bureau of Industrial Cost & Prices (BICP) has been requested to carry out a techno-economic study of cellular service industry. Their report is awaited.

[Translation]

Licences to IITL Mumbai

649. SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (V.S.N.L) has paid Rs. 50 crore to the Iridium India Telecom Limited (IITL) located at Mumbai in the last October but the Department of Telecommunications has not issued licences to the IITL so far;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for making payment in advance for the procurement of equipments;

(d) whether the matter has been inquired and the officials responsible for adopting lackadaisical approach in the matter have been identified and the punishment awarded to them for the same; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) VSNL has made a secured advance payment of Rs. 50 crores to Iridium India Telecom Ltd. for purchase of the gateway equipment after obtaining approval from VSNL Board and after entering into MOU with IITL.

(c) to (e) The matter is being looked into. It is not possible to comment at this stage.

[English]

Funds Release for National Highways

650. DR. JAYANTA RONGPI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the amount released to different States for National Highways during last three years;

(b) the amount utilised by various States during the corresponding period;

(c) the amount demanded by the Government of Assam for National Highways of the States for the current year; and

(d) the time by which the work of National Highway No. 36 between Doboka and Dimapur could be completed?